



Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma provided a wake-up call, reminding us of the importance of disaster preparedness. Ironically, the Heritage Health Index, released soon after the hurricanes, reported that few institutions have disaster plans, and for some of those that do, the plan is out of date. Given human nature, it's easy to put off disaster planning.

That's why we hope you will join us for MayDay. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, set aside some time to do at least one thing to get more prepared to respond to a disaster.

Here are some simple ideas:

- If you have a disaster plan, dust it off and make sure it's up to date.
- If you don't have a plan, commit to creating one by making a timeline for developing it.
- Review and update key documents (including collections inventories and site, building, room, and storage plans); make copies to be sent off site.
- Conduct a building evacuation drill, evaluate the results, and discuss ways to improve on your staff's performance.
- Update your staff contact information and create a wallet-size version of your emergency contact roster, e.g., Pocket Response Plan™ (PRP™) at <http://www.statearchivists.org/prepare/framework/prep.htm>
- Assess risks to your collection.
- Identify and prioritize important collection materials.
- Eliminate hazards such as storage in hallways, blocked fire exits, or improper storage of paints, solvents, etc.
- Do annual maintenance and checks—test your alarm system(s), fire extinguishers, etc.
- Make a plan to install any needed safety systems.
- Plan to train and drill an in-house disaster team.
- Provide staff with easily accessible disaster response information, e.g. <http://www.heritageemergency.org> .
- List and plan to secure disaster response supplies for documentation, personal safety, clean-up, and salvage.
- Identify off-site storage options for your collections.
- Find a "buddy" institution to work with in case of a disaster.
- Get to know your local firefighters and police—invite them to come tour your institution and give you pointers on safety and preparedness.
- Develop a timeline for writing a continuity of operations plan.
- Plan to take a course in risk assessment or disaster planning.

For more suggested activities and resource materials, go to <http://www.loc.gov/preserv>

You can make a difference—help save our heritage!